

KALIDASA'S

SAKUNTALA

A

METRICAL VERSION

(ACT I & ACT II WITH AN INTRODUCTION)

BY

HARINATH DE,

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Calcutta:

PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY H. W. B. MOORE, B.A.,

AT THE IMPERIAL PRESS,

31 7, DUFFERIN VILLAGE STREET,

1907

Introduction

A new translation of *Sakuntala*, when there are so many already in existence, calls for an explanation and the explanation is a very simple one. *Sakuntala* is a lyrical drama strongly resembling in tone and character Tasso's *Aminta* or Guarini's *Pastor Fido*—a fact which none of my predecessors in the field seem to have taken into consideration. Had they done so, they would have translated Kalidasa's dramatic masterpiece not in prose nor in blank verse nor again in blank verse mixed with prose, but in rhyme! verse which alone is the adequate vehicle for representing romantic poetry in English. Again there is no satisfactory translation of *Sakuntala* in English. Sir William Jones's version has long been out of date, that of Sir William Monier Williams is full of blunders and gives no better idea of the original than Mickle's *Lusiad* gives of Camoens's epic. In the preface to the revised edition of his version of *Sakuntala*, published in Sir John Lubbock's "Best Hundred Books of the World" the late Boden Professor of Sanskrit writes "that he can honestly say that he did his best to make his representation of Kalidasa's immortal work as true and trustworthy as possible." But, unfortunately, he has overrated the merits of his own performance. I shall cite a few instances to corroborate my statement. In the Prologue to the Drama there occurs a beautiful song describing the delights of the summer season which may be literally translated as follows —

Introduction

At present are days in which bathing in streams is delightful in which the soft breezes are fragrant on account of the contact with the *patala* flowers in which sleep is easily brought on in the shade and the close of which is charming

Or as Dr Fritze has it —

Jetzt sind die Tage da ein Bad erquicket
Da Wende aus dem Walde leblich duften
Wenn dort Begonien blühen so beuherten
Jetzt ruht der Schlaf in Schatten leicht gefunden
Und wonnevoll sind jetzt die Abendstunden

Monier Williams renders —

Uncas are the charms of holy days
When the cool bath exhilarates the frame
When sylvan gales are laden with the scent
Of fragrant Patalas when soothing sleep
Creeps softly on beneath the deepening shade
And when at last the dulcet calm of eve
Entranscends over every shadow

Take again another passage in which the Hermit remonstrates with the King for the latter's trying to discharge a shaft on the body of a tender fawn —

Let not let no indeed that arrow be discharged on the tender body of a fawn like fire showered on a heap of flowers. How great is the difference between the exceedingly sensitive life of an innocent fawn and your feeble steel head arrows! Therefore be pleased to put back your well-meant arrows. Those arms are meant for protecting sufferers and not for tormenting the innocent

These lines are exquisitely rendered by Hirzel, who prefers the reading *tulı raçaı* ('a heap of cotton') to the ordinary *pushpa raçau* ('a heap of flowers') —

O we doch owe?

De Pfeil da für sie?

Er wu den Feuer n Wolnenballen

Auf z ten Haad an Lebja felen

Der Hindinn Leben
 Erzittert so sehr,
 Dein spitzer Pfeil da
 Verwundet so schwer!
 O, so leg das Geschoss,
 In den Köcher in Eil!

Ihr habt ja zum Schutze des Armen bloss,
 Den Guten zu schädigen nicht, den Pfeil.'

Monier Williams' rendering runs as follows:—

' Now heaven forbid this barbed shaft descend
 Upon the fragile body of a fawn,
 Like fire upon a heap of tender flowers,
 Can thy steel head bolts no meeter quarry find
 Than *the warm life blood of a harmless deer*?
 Res ore, great Prince thy weapon to its quiver
 'More it becomes thy arms to shield the weak,
 Than to bring anguish on the innocent.'

Lastly, let us take the famous passage about the bee (Act I) that flew at Sakuntala's face. Dushyanta apostrophises the bee in lines of which the following is a literal rendering.—

"In whichever direction the bee turns towards the maiden, her rolling eye is darted in that direction. Bending her brows through fear, she is already learning coquettish movements of the eye even though as yet she is uninfluenced by love. And thou, O bee, touchest repeatedly her quivering eye, whose outer-corner moves playfully. Going close to her ear, thou art softly humming as if whispering a secret of love. Thou art drinking her lip that contains all the treasures of delight while she waves her hand. We, on the other hand, O bee, in our enquiry into the truth of the maiden's origin are baffled, where as thou indeed art lucky.

Hirzel happily renders it:—

"Wohin, wohin immer das Bietchen sich bewegt
 Von da, von da fliehst die Lieblich-aug'ge weg
 Sie lernt indem jetzt sie die Brauen bloss aus Furcht
 Zusammenzieht, fern auch von Angst das Augenspiegels.

O die ðü die Augen m t z tte nden W nk ln
 Ihr stre feßt so lose
 In s Ohr hr zu fluste n e n L ebegehe mn ss
 In sassem Gekose
 Und vährend da jent versucht m t dem Handchen
 D r mme z vehren
 O d e du ja dennoch d e L ppen ihr tr nkst
 Das hochs e Beuehren
 Ach mmer m Sucl en nach Wah he t e sunke
 Wo fanden Ruh ?
 Du aber O Hon gerze ge n do ten
 W e se g b st du !

Monier Williams renders —

Where'er the bee h s eaver onset p es
 No v he e no v t i e she da ts her k ndl ng e es
 What love hath yet to te ch fear teaches no v
The furt ve glance and the frown ng brow
 Ah happy bee ! ho v bold y dost thou try
To steal the lustre from her sparkl ng eye
 And n t y c c ng movements hover near
 To murmur tender secrets n her ear
 Or is she coyly va es her hand to s p ?
Lolup nous v e lar fro n her lover l p !
While r s ng do bts may h art s fo d lopes dest oy
 Thou dost the fulness of her cha ms enjoy

Numerous other examples can be cited to show that Monier Williams has not been fortunate in his attempt to present Sakuntala in an occidental garb. The best translation of Sakuntala in any European language is that by Professor Dr. Ludwig Fritze of Kopenhagen. I have followed Professor Fritze's example in taking Professor Pischel's edition of the Bengali recension of the drama as my text. Occasionally I have ventured to correct Professor Pischel's text as will be seen from the footnotes to my version of Sakuntala. I agree with Professor Pischel in regarding

the Bengali recension as the original form of the 'text' of Sakuntala.

I have differed from the learned German translator whose name I have just now mentioned in my interpretation of the following passages :—

(1) Act I. (Ed. Pischel p. 23.)

Dushyanta rises up as if desirous of holding Sakuntala back and then restrains himself saying :—

"Aho ceshtâ prativâpikâ kâminô manovrittî."

Professor Fritze renders :—

'Ach, wie doch bei Liebenden

• Das Denken steht in Einklang mit des Körpers
Bewegungen"

Monier Williams entirely misses the point and renders this as :—

"Ah ! a lover's feelings betray

Themselves by his gestures."

But the real and correct meaning and one that suits the context is :—

"The thoughts of a lover correspond to what he wishes to do"

Or in the words of Lope de Vega :—

"Muchas veces piensa amor

Que hace lo que imagina"

I have rendered it accordingly :—

"How the mere thought comes to be

A moment's rapt reality

In a lover love-oppressed)"

Professor Pischel regards this explanation to be the correct one.

(2) Act II. (Ed. Pischel p. 38.) :—

The beautiful stanzas in which Dushyanta describes Sakuntala's beauty by similes, contain the following expressions —

Anāmuktam ratnam akhandam punyaśam phalam

Monier Williams renders them —

A gem of peerless water just released
Pure and unblemished from its glittering bed !
Or may the maiden be compared to the mellowed fruit
Of virtuous actions in some former birth
Now brought to full perfection ?

Professor Fritzsche's translation runs —

Die Perle die noch nicht zum Schmuck gedient
Die ganze volle Frucht der guten Werke

The Sanskrit is rather ambiguous but the context settles the meaning. Sakuntala is compared to 'a gem as yet unworn' and to 'a fruit reserved for pious deeds'. In other words, union with the peerless maiden is regarded as the reward of pious deeds performed in an anterior birth by the man who is destined to win her. Monier Williams is quite mistaken in interpreting the expression as referring to the beauty of Sakuntala, which he supposes the poet to regard as the fruit of the pious deeds done by the maiden in her former birth. I translate the lines in question in the following manner —

That is fair gem
That none yet wore as ornament
That is reserved fruit
For pious deeds in past lives done

The idea is not uncommon in Indian literature. A lover's song, in the Dīghā Nikāya which is quite as old as the fourth century B C contains the very same idea. —

* Yam me atthi katham punnam asmiṃ puthuṃ mandale
 Tam me sabhanga kalyaṇi taja saddhṃ m vipaccatam
 Yes whatever deeds of virtue in this world were done by me
 All the fruits supremely blessed one, may I reap with only thee

In conclusion, I beg leave to repeat that my version follows the text of the Bengali recension as edited by Professor Pischel. I shall feel very grateful if my readers would inform me of any errors which they may detect in my translation. The remaining acts will follow in due course

HARINATH DE.

IMPERIAL LIBRARY,

March 28th, 1907

My lady sweet !
 When your dressing is complete
 Will you kindly come this way ?

[*Enter Actress*]

Actress

Here I am ! What hest, I pray ?

Actor

Lady lo ! to day we meet
 Before I learned throng, to play
 Sakuntal, a drama new
 By Kalidās, so each must pay
 To his part attention due

Actress.

What can e'er be found amiss
 In the parts assigned by you ?

Actor—[*Smiling*]

Lady, the real truth is this —
 “ I never praise the actor's skill
 Till the learned him applaud ,
 E'en the best trained actor will
 With doubt and diffidence be awed ”

Actress

Right ! But what must I now do ?

Actor.

Charm but the hearing of this throng ! 30

Actress.

And for the subject of my song
What season shall I choose ?

Actor.

Employ

For that this season—'tis but young—
Summer sweet, the time of joy,
“ To bathe in streams what joy divine !
When sylvan gales waft scents from flowers,*
To sleep invite the shady bowers
And grateful is the day's decline.”

Actress—[Sings.]

“ With ruthless fingers damsels twine
Sirisha-blossoms† round their ears, 40
Velvet-tipped their fibres fine,
Flowers which bee's soft kiss endears.”

Actor.

Charming ! Your enrapturing song
Spell-bound holds this listening throng.
Picture-like they gaze ! What play
To please them shall we act to-day ?

* The text has “ *pálala flowers* ” (i. e. *Dignonia suateolens*.)

† The flowers of *Acacia Sirisha* were used by Indian ladies as ear-ornaments. See Act I, line 439 of my translation.

Actress

Noble sir, why not that same
Which had first allured your thought ?
Sakuntalá 'tis called by name
Let us act it

Actor

Thanks ! I had forgot 50
" O Lady, my spirit was ravished away,
So deep did your music enrapture my ear
Even as Dushyanta wanders astray
Pursuing a fleet foot antelope here '

[*Exeunt*]

[*Here ends the Introduction*]

Act. I.

Scene—A Forest.

Enter King Dushyanta armed with a bow and arrows in a chariot and chasing an antelope, attended by his charioteer.

Charioteer

[*Looking at the deer, and then at the King*] :—
My liege,

Your bowstring drawn when I behold
And gaze upon the speckled deer,
How Siva chased that deer of old,*
Methinks, I see in vision clear.

King.

O charioteer, this speckled fawn
Far from our pathway hath us drawn.
How graceful, see, his neck is bent,
As momentarily he turns his glances
Towards my chariot's swift advances,
While, fearful of my shaft's descent, 10
His forelimbs, lo, still onward hieing .
He draws within his haunches, strewing
The road with grass he had been chewing,

* Siva not being invited to Daksha's sacrifice, was so indignant that he confounded the sacrifice, dispersed the guests and chasing Yajna the God of Sacrifice who fled in the form of a deer, overtook and decapitated him.

Which from his panting mouth keeps flying
 Look ! Look ! Again from earth upspringing
 He seems to be in mid air swimming

[With astonishment]

Scarcely possible to keep indeed,
 Within sight swift though I pursue !

Charioteer

Since full of hollows is this ground,
 O King the reins I tightly drew,
 And slackened thus the chariot speed
 Therefore is the distance found

Great, betwixt us and the deer
 But now on level earth we stand
 It cannot long elude you here

King

Let loose the reins then charioteer

Charioteer

I'll do my liege as you command
 But look ! O look !

[Drives the chariot at full speed]

The reins they are loosened the steeds they
 career,
 As though they endured not the speed of the
 deer.

Their forelimbs are strained, the *chowries**
 that make

The crests on their head gear seem scarcely
 to shake 30

* A decoration formed of the white bushy tail of the yak

[*Enter a hermit and two others with him*]

Hermit

[*Raising his hand*]

Here me, O noble king, this deer
 Comes from our hermitage From fra
 So tender, pray, avert your showers
 Of arrows Were it not the same 50
 To pour hot flames on'a heap of flowers ?
 To think that a feather'd steel head dart
 Should transfix a gentle hart !
 'Twere better, sure, your arrows went
 Back to their quiver. Those arms are meant
 To champion sufferers, not to torment
 The creatures that are innocent

King

[*Bows to the hermit*]

Look I replace it

[*Replaces the arrow in its quiver*]

Hermit

Rightly done

Of one who is the shining sun
 Of Puru's* race A son of worth 60
 Unmatch'd—be yours to rule this earth !

* Dīshya ita was sixteenth in descent from Puru, the most famous of his ancestors.

King.

[*Bowing.*]

Thy priestly blessing I accept.

Hermit.

We have come hither to collect
 Fuel, O king. The mighty sage
 Kanwa hath his hermitage†
 Yonder on‡ Mahin's bank ; and here,
 O King, so it not thwart your sphere
 Of purpose, enter and take rest,
 Enjoy the honour of a guest.
 And when you see the hermit's rite
 Performed unhindered, you will know
 What safety spreads that hand of might
 Scarred by drawing oft the bow.

King

The holy sage—abides he there ?

Hermit

To Sakuntala, his daughter fair,
 Injunctions hath he given to treat
 Guests that come with welcome meet.
As for Lord Kanwa, he is gone
 To Somatirtha§ ; thither drawn
 By a deep longing, some dark fate
 That threatens her, to propitiate.

† I regard the words between '*Kanwasva*' and '*anumdanitram*' as a gloss and therefore do not translate them

‡ A right hand tributary of the Ganges at some distance from Delhi

§ A holy place somewhere near the modern Panipat.

King

O Hermit, if it should be so,
I'll see her and, I do believe,
From her the sage will come to know
Of my devotion.

Hermit

Sire, our leave
We take now

[Exit with his two companions]

King

Urge the horses on
A visit to this holy seat
Will make us holier

Charioteer

I obey

[Drives the chariot very quickly]

King

[Looking all about him]

O charioteer, though none did say
So much, 'tis surely clear as day
That this our chariot now doth move
In precincts of the penance grove

Charioteer

How learnt you ? Tell me, I entreat

King.

Dost thou not 'neath yon trees behold
 Grains of the wild rice scatter'd ? These
 Methinks, have dropt from holes in trees
 Which the parrot-ineage hold.
 Scatter'd also round about
 Oil-smear'd stones I seem to see,
 Such as from fruits of *ingud* :* 100
 Are used to press their kernel out.
 Again, observe those herds of deer,
 How heedless roam they near and far,
 And brook the rattling of our car,
 Because their heart is void of fear.
 Drops of water from the bark, †
 The hermit's vesture, oozing mark
 With streaks the paths by which they bring
 •Water from the liquid spring:
 Channels, ‡ see, there are that lave 110
 The roots of yonder trees,
 Of which every little wave
 Is rippling in the breeze,
 While chequered seems each tender spray
 Thanks to the fumes that rise,
 From melting butter duly thrown
 On flames of sacrifice.

* A tree, known also as the *Anchorite's tree* (*tapasataru*) from the fruit of which oil was extracted, which hermits used for their lamps and for ointment.

† i. e. Dresses made of barks were worn by hermits.

‡ i. e. Trenches dug round the roots of trees to collect water.

And, see, there are young fawns at play
Within the penance grove,
As if their hearts had never known ° 120
A fear, o'er lawns, from which is mown
The sacred grass, they rove

Charioteer

I understand

King

[Advancing a little further]

I pray thee, stay

The chariot here, where I'll descend,
So that no rude disturbance may
The dwellers of the grove offend

Charioteer

[Stops the chariot]

I hold the reins in, King, alight

King

[Alighting]

O charioteer, it is not right
To enter penance groves with aught
But humble garments Therefore, hold 130
The bow and vestures which I brought

*[Delivers his dresses and bow to the
charioteer]*

And by the time I shall retrace
My footsteps from the grove, pray see
The steeds are bathed

Charioteer

Even as told,
My hege, your heat perform'd shall be
[Exit]

King

[Walking and loo'ing about]

I'll enter now This seems the place
[Entering and feeling a throbbing sensation
in his arm]

Purest peace this spot doth sway,
What means my right arm's throbbing still? *
How can this hermit grove fulfil
The joy this throbbing bodeth? Nay, 140
Everywhere Fate finds a way
To work, whene'er it may, its will
A voice behind the scenes.
O this way, friends!

King

[Listening]

I hear a talking
Towards the south of yonder glades,
And thither do I purpose walking
[Walking and looking about]
But look! Here come the hermit maids
A watering trees Each carries weight
Proportion'd to her frame—a jar

* A quivering sensation in the right arm is supposed to prognosticate union with a beautiful woman

[*Gazing at them.*]

Heavens ! Of what graceful form they are !
 If such peerless beauty, rare 150
 Even in palaces, here dwell,
 Forest blossoms, I declare,
 Would the garden's growth excel.
 So in this shadow let me wait

[*Stands gazing at them.*]

[*Enter Sakuntala with her two female
 companions, employed in the
 manner described.*]

Sakuntala.

This way, O friends, pray, come this way.

Anasuya

O Sakuntala, hear me, pray,
 Dearer far, it seems to me,
 Those trees unto your father be
 Than your dear self, my dear , for, though
 You are more tender than fresh-blown 160
 Jasmine flowers, why hath he so
 Task'd you to fill with water these
 Basins at the roots of trees ?

Sakuntala.

'Tis not my father's hest alone.
 I too such love towards them bear
 As they my own dear brothers were
 Or sisters.

[*Continues watering the shrubs.*]

Anasuya.

We have given their share
Of water to the trees that bend
With summer-flowers Let us pour
On trees whose flowering time is o'er 170
Some water now , for boon that's given
Without a thought of guerdon, friend,
Is 'pleasing most unto high Heaven.

King,

Is this Sage Kanwa's child ? Ah me !
Hard hearted must sage Kanwa be
Upon her tender limbs to press
Rude bark of the hermit dress.
For he who wishes to inure
To penance such a beauteous frame,
Which least adorned doth most allure, 180
Such a one may well endeavour
With blue lotus leaf to sever,
The obdurate acacia's stem * .

Well ! hiding now behind the trees
I'll watch her unabashed at ease

[*Conceals himself*]

Sakuntala,

O Anasuya, I am pained
By this bark vesture which the hands
Of Priyamvada have fastened. Friend,
I pray thee, loosen thou these bands.

[*Anasuya loosens them*]

* The Sami tree (*Acacia Suma*) the wood of which is very hard, is supposed by the Hindus to contain fire

Priyamvada.

(Smiling.)

Rather blame that budding youth 190
Which your ripening breast expands.

king.

Well says the hermit-maid, in sooth.
Her bosom since bark-vestures hide
Pinned o'er her shoulders and up-tied,
Her young shape not one grace reveals ;
So a yellow leaf the flower conceals.
But e'en though clothes of bark may be
Unsuited to her youth, yet they
Adorn her all as splendidly
As silks or gems or trinkets may. 200
For though she float 'mongst weeds*, that flower,
The lotus, keeps her beauty's dower,
And the moon's spots, though dark enhance
The lustre of her countenance ;
So to this maiden doth her dress
Of bark give greater loveliness.
To forms that loveliness present
What may not serve as ornament ?

Sakuntala.

[Looking before her.]

Methinks that yonder *kesar*† tree
Beckons with waving leaves to me, 210

* i.e. the *Saivala* (*Vallisneria*) an aquatic plant which spreads itself
over ponds, and interweaves itself with the lotus

† *Mimusops elengi*—a tree which looks very ornamental in pleasure-
grounds.

Which, as the gentle breezes blow
Betwixt them, look like fingers ;* so
I'll go and tend it.

[*Walks towards it.*]

Priyamvada.

O dear friend,
Prithce, just there one moment bide.
Sakuntala.

Wherefore ?

Priyamvada.

With you at his side.
That *lesar* tree appears to blend
As with a creeper's graceful frame.
Sakuntala

[*Smiling.*]

Ah ! Thus thou didst obtain, forsooth,
Sweet speaker, thine own lovely name
Priyamvada.†

King.

Sweet speech but truth ‡ 220
As the sprouting leaves her lips are red,
As the lithe bough is her either arm,
Like the bloom in a flower does youth spread
Through her sweet limbs a burning charm.

* Cf Wordsworth — "The budding twigs spread out their fan &c"

† 'Priyam vada means 'Sweet Speaker.'

‡ I read 'priyam ahi talizam vada

Anasuya.

Sakuntal's, 'tis here, O see,
That jasmine. She the mango-tree
Elected for her spouse and thou
Named'st her *Forest Moonlight*?

Sakuntala

[Approaching the plant and looking at it.]

Now,

How glad a season they have chose
For their sweet union! For, behold,
The *Forest Moonlight* doth unfold
Her youth in flowers. The mango-tree
Drest in new leaves, doth seem to me
Fresh for enjoyment.

230

[Continues gazing at it.]

Priyamvada.

Dost thou know

Anasuya, why she gazeth so
Fixed on the *Forest Moonlight*?

Anasuya.

No,

I know not. Prithee, friend, disclose.

Priyamvada

Within her heart of hearts she saith :—
"As the jasmine weds the mango-tree,
Hym may I wed who merits me"

210

Sakuntala

There, girl, thy own thought spoke, in faith
[*Continues watering the trees*]

Anasuya

Sakuntala, hast thou forgot
This *madhavi** that with such care
As thee did our own father rear?
'Tis here

Sakuntala

O friend, I would as soon
Forget myself
[*Going to the plant and looking at it with joy*]

A boon, a boon,
For wondrous tidings I have brought

Priyamada

What is it? Tell me, I implore

Sakuntala

Though now the season is no more,
You, sweet creeper, doth from root
To top with blossoms burgeon o'er

250

Anasuya and Priyamada

[*Quickly going to the creeper*]

True! True!

Sakuntala

What see you now, my friend?

* A beautiful creeper

Priyamvada,

(*Smiling*.)

I soon shall tell you what portends
This, when in marriage tied you'll be.

Sakuntala.

(*Angrily*.)

You do transfer your wish to me.

Priyamvada

I am not jesting. I learnt this
From father. Your connubial bliss.
My friend, it bodeeth, past dispute

Anasuya

Prithee just look, how luxuriously
Sakuntala doth water now
The creeper's root.

260

Sakuntala.

Why should I not?

As my own sister from time past
I have regarded it.

(*Continues watering it.*)

King.

O how

I wish that it may prove her lot
Mothered to be of other caste *
To Kanwa's I Nay, away with doubt!

* In that case Dushyanta being of the warrior caste could marry her
A member of the warrior caste could not marry a girl born of a Brahmin
ancestry. The Brahmin mother.

Sure, with us warriors she can wed;
 Seeing, for her my heart doth yearn.
 The promptings of the good, 'tis said,
 The scale in dubious matters turn. 270
 The truth, the truth I shall find out.

Sakuntala.

(*In a flurry.*)

Help ! From the jasmine flowers a bee
 Is flying at my face.

[*Attempts to drive it away.*]

King.

[*Gazing at her ardently*]

Ah me !

For wheresoe'er the bee now flies,
 The maiden turns her fluttering eyes,
 Though she's a stranger yet to love,
 Already her swift terrors move,
 Their pupils, as in coquetry.

(*In a tone of envy.*)

And thou art happy wandering bee,
 For while I wretched do assay 280
 Her birth to fathom, thou dost stray
 Touching her dear eyes momentarily,
 The edges of whose lids do quiver,
 Since terror of thee ne'er doth leave her.
 And as thou hoverest past her ear
 A humming, thou therein dost pour

Love's secrets, while the maid in fear
Waves her hands, and thou dost sip
Love's summed essence in her lip.

Sakuntala.

O ! from this plague deliver me !

290

Anasuya and Priyamvada.

[*Smiling*]

Deliver you ? Ah, how can we ?
Call Dushyanta to your aid.
'Tis he protects each hermit-glade.

King.

Now is the time for me to show
Myself to them. Why should I fear ?

[*Checks himself when the words
are half-uttered. Aside.*]

But stay ! That will but make them know
My rank. Let be ! I'll pass for guest
New come.

Sakuntala.

[*Moving a step or two further off.*]

The monster will not rest.

To shun him elsewhere I must go.
Again he comes to me. Help ! Ho !

300

King.

[*Advancing hastily*]

When the great son of Puru sways
The earth and Mischief curbs her ways,
Who, who is this Presumption aids

To harm the harmless hermit maids?

[*All look at the King and are embarrassed*]

Anasuya

'Twas nothing serious This our friend

[*Points to Sakuntala*]

Was by a wicked bee distressed

King

[*Turning to Sakuntala*]

I hope your penance gloriously

Doth prosper *

[*Sakuntala stands confused and silent*]

Anasuya

* Yes, because a guest

So noble as yourself hath deigned

A visit.

Priyamvada

Welcome, sir, and thou 310

Sakuntala, to cottage go,

Bring fruits and bring too offerings meet

This water here will wash his feet.

King

Offerings plenteous to me

Are your words so kind and sweet

* This is the regular formula of salutation addressed to hermits and hermitesses

Anasuya.

May it please you, sir, to rest
A little while upon this seat
Beneath the *saptaparna** tree
Whose shade drops coolness

King

And you too

320

Must be for wearied with your task
Of piety so let me ask
Of you to sit awhile

Priyamvada

[*Aside to Sakuntala*]

But, friend

Sakuntala, speak I right?
Should we not our good guest attend?
Near him a seat let us then take

[*All sit down together*]

Sakuntala [*Aside*]

Ah me! What aileth me? The sight
Of this new stranger, doth awake
Emotions in me strange and new
Ill suited to a hermitage.

King

(*Looking at all by turns*)

Delightful must your friendship be
You are so like in form and age

330

* *saptaparna* a tree having seven leaves on a stalk.

Priyamivada.

Who is this, Anasuya, pray,
So handsome, yet so dignified,
Whose courteous converse doth display
A sovereign majesty allied
With mildness?

[*Aside to Priyamvada.*]

I too, dearest friend,
Am all as curious to know.
I'll question him.

(Aloud.)

Distinguished Sir !

So courteous are your words, they lend
Courage to question what high line 340
Of royal sages you adorn.
What country may your absence mourn ?
And, pray you, tell us what could move
Your honoured self to undergo
Exposure and travail indign
In journey to this penance-grove.

Sakuntala

[*Aside.*]

O heart impatient, pull thou not
At me for utterance ! For with him,
See, Anusuya doth confer
Of that which laboured so thy thought. 350

King
[*Aside.*]

What best to do now ? Or betray
My person and my rank ? Or hide
The knowledge from these maids ? Let be !

(*Aloud.*)

Ladies, great Puru's progeny
I serve. The Vedas well I know.
'Tis mine o'er justice to preside
In the great city. Now I go
Journeying the holy places through,
So hither have I turned my way.

Sakuntala.

Then hermits may now live secure 360
Under a guardian's watchful care.

. [*Sakuntala gazes bashfully at the King*]

Priyamvada & Anasuya.

[*Perceiving the state of her feelings and that of the
King. Aside to Sakuntala.*]

If, Sakuntala my dear,
Our father were now present here—

Sakuntala

[*Angrily.*]

Well, what then ?

Priyamvada & Anasuya.

He would not spare
His life's best treasure, I am sure,
To honour this distinguished guest.

Sakuntala,

[Angrily]

Away ! What's brewing in your heart ?
I will not hear

King

Will you impart,
Ladies, some news about your friend ?

Anasuya

Favoured we feel by this request. 370

King

A life ascetic wedlock-free
Hath Kanwa led unto this day ;
Her father—how then can he be ?

Anasuya

Nay, good Sir, doth not one live
A king born sage of puissant sway,
Who doth from Kusa's race descend ?*

King

There lives one What of him ? I pray.

Anasuya.

'Twas he, this maiden here begot,
To Kanwa, for the care he's taken
In rearing her a babe forsaken, 380
A father's name our friend doth give

* i. e. The great sage Visvamitra (great grandson of Kusa or Kusa) who raised himself by his austerities from the warrior-caste to that of a brahmin.

King

"A babe forsaken"—wonder fraught
And strange your tale is So her lot
I from its commencement let me hear

Anasuya

You shall, good Sir In time long past
That mighty sage of regal caste
Practised austerities severe—
Acts at whose awfulness no god
But trembled stricken with alarm
To interrupt his aim, I hear,
Fair Menaka, a nymph, they sent

330

King

Yes, I know, the gods are awed
Ever to see us mortals bent
On such penances austere †
What followed next?

Anasuya

The sweet, sweet Spring
Was come and he stood marvelling
At her intoxicating charm

King

I guess the sequel She, 'tis clear,
Was of that nymph born

Anasuya.

Just so, sir,

†, i.e. penances are the ones which the gods must endorse. —Sauter

King.

Surely, none else could mother her. 400
 To such a radiant thing of light
 Could aught that's mortal e'er give birth?
 The lighting's flash that quivereth bright
 Rises not from under earth.

[*Sakuntala remains modestly seated with down-
 cast eyes.*]

[*Aside.*]

Now, may my longings be fulfilled.

Priyamvada.

[*Looking with a smile at Sakuntala and then
 turning towards the King.*]

Methinks, more knowledge you desire.

[*Sakuntala makes a chiding gesture
 with her finger.*]

King.

O lady, rightly have you guessed,
 From eagerness to hear of great
 And noble lives, I shall request,
 You tell me what I would enquire. 410

Priyamvada.

Pray, Sir, do not hesitate.
 We're hermitesses and may be
 Questioned unreservedly.

King.

Must she observe the hermit-vow,
 Which balks the Love-god's arrows now,

Until her sire this mud bestows
 In marriage ? Or must her sweet days
 For ever mate her with shy does
 Belov'd of her, because their gaze
 Such beauty as her own displays ? 120

Priyamvada.

Unto this day, Sir, hath our friend
 The strict life of a hermit led
 But the sage Kanwa doth intend
 She should a worthy husband wed

King

[*Aside*]

Cherish, O heart, thy dear desire,
 From doubts henceforward thou art free.
 What to thee once burned a fire,
 Shines a gem that touched can be.

Sakuntala

[*Pretending to be angry.*]

I must hie hence ♀

Anasuya

Ah ! wherefore, dear ?

Sakuntala

To bring to Dime Gautami's ear * 130
 What nonsense Priyamvada speaks her.

Anasuya

Sakuntala, it is not fit.

I or hermitesses thus to quit

* She is the Mother Superior of the female section of this society of hermitesses.

[*Forcing her to turn back*]

Tired must the gentle maiden be
 Watering her trees, for do but look !
 Her shoulders droop and both her arms
 Glow with exertion lifting oft
 The water jar Her bosom soft
 Doth with her quick breath palpitate
 Her face too is bedewed with sweat,
 That mars the *sirisha* pendant's* charms
 A straying lock, whose fillet band 460
 Hath dropt, she holds up with one hand
 From that debt now I'll set her free

[*Offers a ring to Priyamada Both the maidens,
 reading the name 'Dushyanta' on the seal, look at
 each other with surprise*]

Nay, maidens, do not suffer me
 For this ring's lord to be mistook
 It is a present from my King

[*Returning the ring to Dushyanta*]
 You must not part then with the ring.
 Freed by your mere desire is she,

(*To Sakuntala.*)

And since our good guest—or indeed
 Shall I say, prince?—doth intercede
 On your behalf, I shall forego 470
 Strict payment of the debt you owe
 So whither would you now away ?

* See the last footnote on page 1

Sakuntala.

(*Aside.*)

Were I but mistress of my will,
I would not leave him.

Priyamvada.

Tarrying still,

Sakuntala ?

Sakuntala.

Thou dost forget
I am no longer in thy debt.
To go where'er I wish, I'm free.

King.

[*Gazing at Sakuntala. Aside*]

Can it be, this maid so shy
Feels towards me even as I
Towards her. Be what will, my hope 480
That seemed so fruitless, findeth scope.
For, though she mix no speech with me,
She leans her ear attentively
To all I speak ; though she not dare
To stay before my countenance,
Yet—I have marked her—doth forbear
On aught in chief to fix her glance.

A voice behind the Scenes.

O hermits, haste to save the deer
That within your precincts dwell,
For, Dushyanta, we hear tell, 490
Doth a-hunting hither near.

The dust-clouds that his horse-hooves raise
 Are red-gold in the sun-set's blaze,
 And down, like the swarming locust-flight,
 They do upon the trees alight,
 The trees upon whose branches dark
 Are hung the dripping robes of bark.

King

(*Aside.*)

Ah spite ! My followers in their quest
 To find me do these groves infest.

A voice behind the Scenes.

An elephant, O hermits, come 500
 Unto our holy forest-home,
 Goes casting terror and doth roam
 'Midst timorous women and among
 Men too old and boys too young.

See, see, into the hermitage
 The mighty elephant hath burst
 By the chariot terrified ;

And his entrance hath dispersed
 The timid deer that here abide.

An obstacle incarnate he 510
 To our austerities doth rage.

Already one tusk he hath broke
 Wherewith he dealt a mighty stroke
 On his obstructor—a tall tree ;
 And he draggeth violently
 Creepers that around him were
 That his frame

Anasuya & Priyamvada

We pray

That you, sir, so supremely wise

Will not from us girls refrain

Your pardon for our incomplete,

Poor welcome Humbly we entreat

That your noble self may deign

Us to visit once again

540

King

O, say not so Tis honour great

But your looks to contemplate

Sri untala

Anasuya, look, I m stung

My foot a point of *lusa** grass

Has pierced as after you I pass

And my dress has caught among

The brambly *luruvala* † Please

Wait for me till I release

My garment

[*Exit with her two companions after making pretexts
for delay to steal glances at the King*]

King

Ah is it then so ?

All gone ! Peace heart ! I too will go

Since first this maiden met my view,

560

* *lusa* *Persea indica* - a grass the awns of which are very long and taper to a sharp needle-like point.

† A species of *Barleria* *apricina* covered with sharp prickles.

How slow my heart moves, O how slow,
Back to my city to return !
I have it ! I my retinue
Will bid encamp them by this glade.
Ah me ! Ah me ! I cannot turn
From thinking of this hermit-maid.
As forward goes my body, so
Backward ever turns my mind,
E'en as the silken streamers go 560
Of banners borne against the wind.*

[*Exit King.*]

(End of Act I)

* Compare the opening lines of Thomas Moore's poem entitled
"The Journey Onwards" —

"As slow our ship her foamy track
Against the wind was cleaving,
Her trembling pennant still look'd back
To that dear isle 'twas leaving"

Act II

Scene — A plain on the skirts of the forest
Enter Vidushaka (the Jester) in a melancholy mood.

Vidushaka

(*Sighing*)

Heigho ! My companioning
With this hunt enamoured King
Hath to a shadow worn me out.
“ There a boar crashes ! ” “ There a deer
Flies from the thicket ! ” Pealing shout
On shout like this bedins my ear
While summer’s fiercest ardours burn
We must till midday range about
O’er glides where shadows umber thin,
And since with heat the streams are dried 10
We must perforce be satisfied
With such drink as stagnates in
Pools whose putrid waters turn
Bitter to the taste or sour
With the drop from hour to hour
Of leaves upon them But sore thirst
Could drive us to such drink accurst.
At random quite we dine Yet worst
Of all is that we chiefly eat .
Of palate scorching roasted meat. 20
Elephants trumpet, horses neigh
All night and drive sweet sleep away
And willy nilly we must wake
Ere dawn aroused by horrid din

Which those game-greedy sins of sin
 The forest-ranging huntsmen raise.
 Is that all ? No. A pimple grows
 Upon the boil.* The other day
 Our king his comrades did forsake
 And hunting followed in the wake 30
 Of a fleet fawn. Straight he goes
 To a grove where hermits dwell.
 There, woe's me ! as it befell
 Through my curs'd lot, he a maid
 Called Sakuntala sees. 'Tis said
 Since then never to return
 Homeward doth his spirit yearn.
 As my mind such thoughts doth think
 My eyes forget to have their wink
 Of sleep, when lo ! the day doth break ; 40
 For all which there's no medicine, none !
 I'm waiting till my royal friend
 His morn-prayer said, his toilet done
 This way may his footsteps bend.

[*Walking and looking about.*]

But soft ! with wild flowers garlanded
 With his bow upon his hand,
 His lady-love upon his heart,
 Hither tend my monarch's feet.
 Here then must I take my stand
 As I were palsied and my part 50
 Well playing, respite thus entreat.

(*Stands leaning on a staff.*)

Enter King Dushyanta.

* An Indian equivalent for "Misfortune never comes alone."

King.

True, she is difficult to gain,
 Yet some solace 'tis to know
 Her thought towards me, and although^h
 Love may not its wish attain
 Yet their mutual longings deep
 Loving hearts in joy must steep.
 Ah me ! Lovers by such art
 Beguile their souls. They love to read^d
 Their own thoughts in their loved one's heart. 60
 Her glance was tender, though 'twere turning^g
 On other things, and slow her gait,
 Be it through coquetry or weight
 Of her own hips, the words she spake^e
 Unto her friend with anger'd brow
 Who stopt her saying "Go not thou"—
 Were these not meant for me ? O how^w
 Lovers themselves in their fond yearning^{ing}
 Pivot of all that happens make !

Vidushaka.

(Still in the same attitude.)

O monarch, I am powerless
 To stretch this arm, so let me bless
 With words only.

70

King.

(Smiling.)

Whence the pain
 That palsies you ?

Vidushaka.

You strike a blow
At mine eye, then ask that I
Should the subtle cause explain
Which causes them with tears to flow.

King.

Good friend, your words transcend my skill
To comprehend them, be more plain.

Vidushaka.

When on a river-bank you spy
A cane-plant that doth imitate
A hunch-back, King, be pleased to state
What makes it so—or its own will
Or the surge infuriate ?

King.

Doubtless the torrent.

Vidushaka.

Even so
'Tis you who wrought my body's woe.

King.

How can it be ?

* The Vidushaka in the Indian dramas is a Brahmin's son, extremely timid and voracious. He bears a close resemblance to the *parasitus* of the Plautine comedy.

Vidushaka

Does it befit

A monarch like yourself to quit
 Your realm ancestral that you may
 Huntsman like in forests stray ?
 I am a Brahman, as you know,
 And ever since you made me go
 In your suit in quest of game
 All disjointed is my frame
 And since, alas ! these limbs no more
 Their former ruler's power obey
 Even for one single day
 Respite grant me, I implore

90

King

[*Aside*]

That then is his prayer I too
 Listless of the chase have grown
 And all for Kanwa's daughter She 100
That charmer haunts my memory
 No more, now the heart have I
 To bend my bow against the deer
 Though shaft bedight and drawn And why ?
 They by ever dwelling near
 That sweet maiden, to my thought
 Have the bright contagion caught
 Of her lustre shooting o'er

Vidushaka.

[*Looking at the King's face*]

There's something else upon his mind

Alas ! to woods I make my moan 110

King.

[*Smiling*]

It is not proper not to heed

A friend's request, so I refrain

From going to the chase again

Vidushaka.

Long may you live !

[*Moves off*]

King.

Good fellow ! Stay,

Lest to something I would say.

Vidushaka

Needs must I kingly best obey.

King

From hunts laborious thou art freed.

In an easier task I need

Thy good help, sirrah

Vidushaka

Is it, pray,

In eating sweetmeats ?

King

I ll declare

120

Vidushaka

I have the leisure

King

Ho ! who s there ?

[*Enter Warder*]

Warder

What commands Your Majesty ?

King

Bid the General come to me

Warder

I ll do my hege as you command
(*Goes out and returns with Raivataka*)

[*To the General*]

This way, Lord General at hand,
There His Majesty doth stay,
And fain would converse with you Pray
Be pleased to turn your steps this way

General

[*Looking at the King*]

Hunting, sure, is a harmful thing
To the frame But our good king

130

To humour well our master's mind !

[*To the King Aloud*]

My liege, what this mad loon doth speak
Is sheer folly Need we seek

Better proof than we can find
In you, our royal Master ? See

How chase reduces fat and thins

The hunter's waist and makes more fit 160

For deeds of might the hunter's frame

To know what changes rage and fear

Work upon the minds of beasts—

This lore hunting teaches clear ,

Also when the archer's aim

Doth a moving target hit,

What high glory then he wins !

To think the chase should be maligned

As though it were a vice ! Say, where

Such amusement, can we find 170

In other things ?

Vidushaka

[*Angrily*]

Out of my sight

Thou advocate of brutish might !

Know, our royal Lord hath now

Returned to his old self and thou

Son of a slave girl, do thou roam

From forest unto forest till

An old old bear that longs to kill

Asyabakam adana may ill.

His stomach with thee

King,

[To the General.]

Since, O friend,

We have come nigh a hermit-home 180
Thy counsel, I cannot commend.
Let bisons plunge in pools of mud
And butt with horns their waters oft
While herded 'neath the shadow soft
The deer may safely chew the cud.
In the pools let each leading boar
Uproot the sedge and well he may,
For with string unstrung once more
My bow must have some rest to-day.

General.

As likes you best.

King.

So now recall.

The archers that have gone before
And do thou bid the soldiers all
Disturb not the calm hermit-grove
But from it far their tumults move.
Hermits are forbearing, yet
Within them secretly doth glow
A hidden principle of ire
Prone to blaze and this they show
Only when provoked by fire

Of others that inflame them	Such	200
The sun gem* is though cool to touch		

General

I'll do as bid

Vidushakā

Out of my sight !
Thou advocate of brutish might ?

[Exit General]

King

Doff your hunting garb and thou
Doorkeeper, in thy post abide

Vidushakā

You've cleared you of the flies, so now
Sit you down upon this stone
O'er which the branches of the tree
Have spread a shadowing canopy,
And I at ease, near to your side
Shall seated be

210

King

Pray go before

Vidushakā

Nay after you

* i.e. *Suryakānta* (the bejewelled of the sun) — a kind of glass lens

King.

Friend, I must own
Useless quite thine eyes to be,
Since they thus have missed the view
Of what was most worth seeing.

Vidushaka

Why ?

Stands not yourself before me ?

King.

True !

To each man handsomest is he
He loveth 'Tis of her speak I
Sakuntala that fair maid
Glory of yon hermit-glade.

220

Vidushaka

[*Aside*]

I must encourage him no more
In this desire. (*Aloud*) Why will you gaze
On that hermit maid when she
Wed to you can never be ?

King

Fool !

Say, then, wherefore do men raise
Charmed eye towards the moon's bright horn*

* Professor Ludwig Fritze of Koepenick aptly compares.—

“Die Sterne, die begehrt man nicht
Man freut sich ihrer Pracht,
Und in Entzücken blickt man auf
In jeder heitern Nacht.”

Nor once veil the steadfast lid ?
 Know Dushyanta never did
 Bend his heart on thing forbid.

Vidushaka

How so ?

King .

230

 Kanwa's child is born
 Of a dazzling nymph divine.
 Ever since she was forsook
 By her nymph-mother, Kanwa took
 Her nurture on him. Is not she
 Like a fresh young jasmine-flower
 Dropt upon an *arka*-tree ? †

Vidushaka

As one sick of dates may yearn
 For sour tamarind, so your heart
 Scorns the lovely dames that dwell
 In your palace but to burn
 For a Sakuntala.

240

King.

Well !

Thou hast not seen her to this hour,
 So thou may'st such folly prate.

† A large and vigorous shrub known to botanists as *Calotropis gigantea*.

Vidushaka.

Charming must she be who breeds
Such wonderment in you.

King.

What needs
More talking ? Ah me ! Did the great
Artist calmly ponder first
O'er all lovely things he erst
Had made, and were they then combined
All to mould this wondrous maid ? 250
For while I His glorious art
Ponder and her form divine,
Seems she like a gem to shine
Matchless among womankind.

Vidushaka

She must surely cast in shade
All beauteous women.

King

Yet my mind
Thinks : " This flower whose fragrant scent
None inhaled yet, this soft spray
Yet unsevered from its stem
By rude fingers,* this fair gem 260

* Compare Catullus —

" Ut flos in saeptis, secretus nascitur hortis
Ignotus pecori, nullo contusus aratro..
Sic virgo &c."

And Ariosto's exquisite imitation. —

" La verginella è simile alla rosa,
Che n' bel giardin su la natia spina,
Mentre sola, e sicura si riposa " &c.

That none yet wore as ornament,
 This fresh honey which yet none
 Tasted, this reserved fruit
 For pious deeds in past lives done,
 This lovely form where none may trace
 Aught that mars its perfect grace—
 Who will enjoy it, who can say ? ”

Vidushaka.

Meet is it then that your suit
 Should succeed, or else that maid,
 I fear, will surely fall a prey
 To some hermit-lad whose head
 Reeks of oil of *ingudi*.*

270

King

Not mistress of her will is she,
 From home her sire is away.

Vidushaka.

Yet you must know how her mind
 Is towards yourself inclined.

King.

My friend, you know as well as I, ,
 By nature hermit-maids are shy.
 For she did lower both her eyes
 When on her I bent my glance ;
 Her laughter, could not, did not rise

280

* See footnote on page 11

From the cause she did advance.
 Fettered so by modesty
 Was the love of that sweet maid,
 That to me it seemed to be
 Neither hidden, nor displayed.

Vidushaka.

Should she then on your lap have leapt
 Soon as she saw you ?

King

When she fled
 With her two friends, methinks, I read
 The feelings of her heart. "A blade 290
 Of grass has stung my feet" the maid
 Of the dainty limbs thus said
 Needlessly, when she had stept
 A paces few, back did she turn
 As though her bark dress she would free
 From branches of the brambly tree
 Though there it clung not.

Vidushaka.

Surely, she
 Had given you victuals for your way
 To make your longing heart thus yearn
 For the hermit precincts.

King

Friend,
 Frame some pretext, so that we
 Thither once again may wend. 300

Vidushaka.

Why a pretext, seeing you
Are Sovereign ?

King

What is it you say ?

Vidushaka

You can bid the hermits pay
Tithe* to you of wild rice due

King

Fool !

They bring tithe of other things

These hermits—things such as defy
The worth of costliest gems piled high
Transient are the tithes that kings
Bid their other subjects pay,

310

The penance tithe† the hermit brings
For them, doth survive for aye.

A voice behind the scene

At last our object we have found

King

[*Listening*]

So grave and calm the voice doth sound,
They must be hermits

[*Enter Doorkeeper*]

* The Hindu tithe was a sixth part of liquid flowers roots, fruit grass &c.

† i. e. A part of the blessings arising from the self-imposed penance of the hermit accrued to the king who protected the n.

Door keeper

Victory

Attend you royal Majesty !
At the entrance door there stand
Two hermit youths

King

Without delay,
Bring them before me

Door keeper,

At command !

[*To the Hermits*]

This way, O hermits, come this way 320

[*Enter Hermits*]

First Hermit

How majestic is his mien,
Yet what confidence entreat
Those features Saint like kings are seen
Of such brow, so haughty sweet
All his folk protecting he
Treasures duly stores of merit
And doth a stage of life inherit
Which by mortals reached can be
Far as the high heavens ring
By seraph bards sung o'er and o'er 330
Praises of this self curbed king
Whom as hermit pure they sing

With 'Kung'-title placed before.*

Second Hermit

Is this Dushyanta Indra's friend ?

First Hermit

Why askest thou ? I prithee state

Second Hermit.

'Tis no marvel that whose arm
Is like the long bar of the gate
Of a city, should this earth
Far as lies its watery girth
Rule singly. Gods who Demons hate, 340
When troubled by their war's alarm,
Hope that their victory is nigh
When this King his bow doth bend
Or Indra hurls his bolt from high.

Hermits

Al hail O Monarch !

King.

And I too

Salute you both.

Hermits

O King, may we

Have good fortune !

* i.e. He is king sage' ('Rajarsi') a degree lower ('Maharsi') a title which Brahmans alone could obtain.

King

Fain would I
Learn what made you hither hie

Hermits.

Hearing your majesty is near
The hermits pray—

King

I wish to hear 350
What it is that they command.

Hermits

As our chief hermit is not here,
Our peaceful hermitage a band
Of lawless Demons doth infect
They our holy rites molest.
Therefore, O Monarch, thee we pray
In our hermit grove to stay
Together with thy charioteer
For a few nights and to clear
Of dangers all our home

King

Nay I 360
Reckon this an honour high

Vishakhā,

(*Aside*)

Now to the very place you so
Desired hath Chance pushed you to go.

With 'King'-title placed before.*

Second Hermit.

Is this Dushyanta Indra's friend ?

First Hermit.

Why askest thou ? I prithee state.

Second Hermit.

'Tis no marvel that whose arm
Is like the long bar of the gate
Of a city, should this earth
Far as lies its watery girth
Rule singly. Gods who Demons hate, 340
When troubled by their war's alarm,
Hope that their victory is nigh
When this King his bow doth bend
Or Indra hurls his bolt from high.

Hermits.

All hail O Monarch !

King,

And I too

Salute you both.

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O King, may you

Have good fortune !

* i.e. He is 'king sage' ('*Rajarsi*') a degree lower than the 'sage' ('*Maharsi*') a title which Brahmins alone could obtain.

King

Fain would I
Learn what made you hither hie

Hermits.

Hearing your majesty is near
The hermits pray—

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I wish to hear 350
What it is that they command

Hermits

As our chief hermit is not here,
Our peaceful hermitage a band
Of lawless Demons doth infest.
They our holy rites molest
Therefore, O Monarch, thee we pray
In our hermit grove to stay
Together with thy charioteer
For a few nights and to clear
Of dangers all our home.

King

Nay I 360
Reckon this an honour high

Vishvaka

(*Aside*)

Now to the very place you so
Desired hath Chance pushed you to go

King

O Raivata! bid charioteer
Bring chariot, bows, and arrows here

Hermits

A worthy act for you whose aim
Is to follow in the wake
Of your forefathers' virtuous fame
Puru's sons know how to make
Sacrifices such as wrest
Fears from bosoms fear oppress

King

Proceed, O hermits and I shall
Your footsteps sue

Hermits

May victory
Ever your royal self befall !

King

Friend Madhavya, thee I ask,
Wouldst thou Sakuntala see ?

Vidushaka

Then was no danger . Woe is me !
Now full of peril is the task

King

Fear not, with me thou shalt abide

Vidushaka

As wheel warder at your side

380

Raivataka.

The ready chariot now awaits
Your victorious journey, King
And Karabhak from city come
Doth tidings from your mother bring

King

From my mother ?

Raivataka.

So he states

King

Bring him

Raivataka

Our Lord the King is here
So Karabhak approach thou near

Karabhak.

Victorious be your Majesty !
Your Royal Mother says to you —
“ But four days hence approacheth due
That fast which mothers undertake
To break it eating with their sons
And mine (long live he !) swift must come
For parent's honour as is fit.”

King

Here must I for hermits' sake
 Answer their great need at once;
 And there my mother calls me home.
 Neither ought I to omit.
 What must I do now ?

Vidushaka

Do as did 400

Old Trisanku * Thyself instal
 Right in the middle

King

I am bid

To different spots by Duty's call.
 Hence my mind is cleft in twain,
 As hindered by a rock, amain
 Bursting parts a river's stream.

(To Vidushaka)

As her own son doth thee esteem
 My royal mother ; so I pray
 Repair thou homeward and fulfil
 Towards her a son's duty ; say 410

* Trisanku was an ancient king of Avodhya (Oudh) whose story is told in the Ramayana. He is said to have requested the sage Vashishtha to raise him alive to heaven, whereupon the irate sage cursed the bold king who at once became a *Chandala* (i.e. a pariah). Sage Vishwamitra the antagonist of Vashishtha took up the case of Trisanku and by his supernatural powers raised him alive to heaven. But the gods loth to admit an interloper pushed him down. Vishwamitra, nothing daunted again raised him up. Thus the unfortunate monarch was condemned to remain in the region between heaven and earth, with his heels raised towards the heavens and his head bent downwards towards the earth. It is said that he still shines as a star in the southern hemisphere.

Here I must remain until
I the hermits' wish have done.

Vidushaka.

Think not one moment that I dread
Demons.

King

How can that be said
Of mighty Brahmin as thou art ?

Vidushaka.

Now like true born monarch's son
I wish to go

King.

My retinue
With thee will I bid depart.
I all tumults must remove
From the hermits' penance grove

420

• Vidushaka.

I look a true born prince

King

(*To himself*)

'Tis true

He is loquacious and may tell
My women folk of her I woo.
But let that be !

(Aloud)

Hear me, my friend,
 A reverence felt in high degree "
 For hermits maketh me to wend
 Towards the grove where hermits dwell
 I have no passion for the maid
 For what am I and what is she—
 'Mongst the fawns she a stranger bred
 To Love? Prithee seriously
 Take not what in jest I said

Vidushaka.

Of course, of course, so must it be.

[*Exeunt*]

End of Act II